

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY EDITION

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

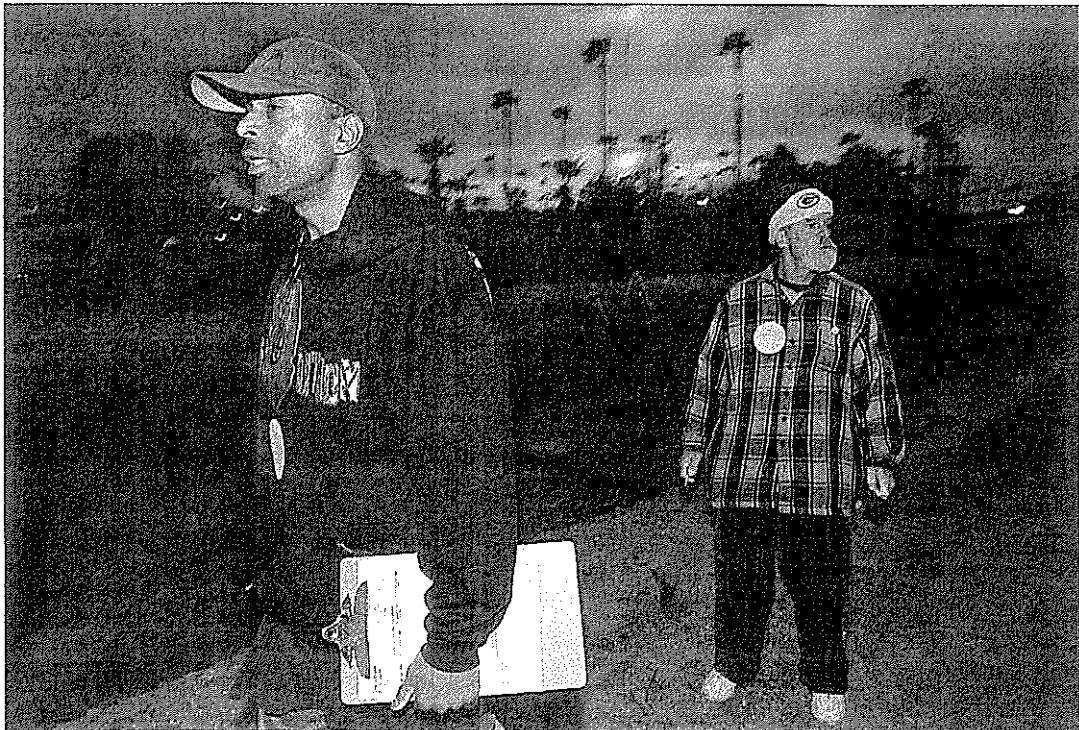
SINCE 1878

INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S NEWSPAPER

WWW.PE.COM

Wednesday, February 28, 2007

SAN BERNARDINO: STREET PEOPLE GUIDE VOLUNTEERS IN CENSUS



GREG VOJTKO/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Daryl Sconiers, left, and Kirk Grieve search for street people as part of a homeless census for San Bernardino County.

Teams tally county homeless

Applicants for federal funding are urged to update counts

BY RICHARD BROOKS
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Wriggling through a hole in the fence surrounding a vacant industrial building on the edge of Grand Terrace, Kirk Grieve hollered that he had found evidence of a homeless encampment inside.

"There are three areas where they put down foam rubber and tarps," Grieve told three companions Tuesday. "This is where they come at night."

Grieve should know. He has been homeless since February

2006. He's using his street smarts to find street people throughout San Bernardino County for a two-day homeless census that ends today.

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development urges that counts be conducted every two years. Without current numbers, applications for federal funding for homeless programs receive lower scores and potentially less funding.

San Bernardino County last conducted a count in November

2002, when the results showed there were between 5,300 and 8,300 homeless countywide. This year's numbers are scheduled to be released in May.

A second phase of the project is set to begin Monday, when interviewers will seek out roughly 600 homeless people for a survey on a wide variety of details, including the number of homeless youth, veterans and seniors.

For this week's count, two-person teams — each including one volunteer with a car —

drive through every census tract in the county, checking residential neighborhoods and likely hangouts for the homeless.

Popular spots include abandoned buildings, underpasses and bridges, flood control channels and river washes, beside railroad tracks and beneath bushes and trees.

"Homeless seek out locations away from the cops and the people," said Grieve, who helped spot about a dozen en-

See HOMELESS/B7

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY EDITION

THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

SINCE 1878

INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S NEWSPAPER

WWW.PE.COM

Wednesday, February 28, 2007

HOMELESS

CONTINUED FROM B1

campments Tuesday, including three in a wooded gully that's a short walk from homes on both sides. "Close enough (to urban areas) that you can panhandle and hustle and still be away from everybody."

DOWN ON THEIR LUCK

Many homeless don't fit the stereotypes. Daryl Sconiers, 48, of Fontana, was a first baseman for the then-California Angels from 1981 to 1985.

"I got into cocaine and I only lasted four years," he said, after helping with Tuesday's count. "I've run into (former) judges and ex-policemen. It can happen to anybody. The homeless are some of the most warm-hearted people you could ever come across. But you gotta (look) beyond the external."

Many homeless people are down on their luck and need a

job, said Joe Staudt, who works with the homeless as part of his effort to obtain a master's degree in social work at Cal State San Bernardino.

Staudt, a volunteer driver during Tuesday's count, said the two biggest needs of the homeless in the San Bernardino area are housing and jobs.

"These guys jumped at the chance to make \$10 an hour for five hours," Staudt said of the homeless guides for Tuesday's count. "Communities need to take a good look and say, 'We have homeless in our backyard,' and do something about it (by offering) outreach services and shelters."

UNDERCOUNT LIKELY

Tuesday's count was hampered by rain and by the need to assign some guides to areas and communities they didn't know well, said Jacqui Sheffield, who served as a guide in portions of Colton, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda and San Bernardino.

"That'll affect the count," she said. "If you don't know the area, you don't know where to go. But I used my street knowledge and just checked all places, like the wash, bridges and the sides of freeways where there's a lot of bushes they can camp under."

Though this count involved a helicopter and 150 teams during the two days, nearly all homeless censuses result in undercounts, said Peter Connery, vice president and project director for Applied Survey Research, a Santa Cruz County-based company that is overseeing the count and survey.

"You're trying to find a group of people who are under the radar — who really don't want to be found," Connery said. "We're going to miss folks. You've got people living in Twentynine Palms in caves. You've got people living in sewers."

Reach Richard Brooks at 909-806-3057 or rbrooks@PE.com